

Fig. 1 *Slow Action*, installation shot of four channel installation at Picture This, Bristol, 2010.

EXAMPLE

Slow Action (2010/11) by British filmmaker and artist Ben Rivers is an example for a moving image installation whose presentation is identical with its documentation. The multiplatform project² *Slow Action* is a post-apocalyptic audio-visual travelogue on the biogeographies of the four islands Eleven, Hiva (The Society Islands), Kanzennashima, and Somerset. As they are cut off from the outside world, each island has evolved a distinct survival strategy for its organisms. *Slow Action* consists of a one minute establishing sequence and four short films of 11 minutes each. In correspondence to the survival strategies of the islands, Rivers has evolved four ways to display *Slow Action* in the *dispositifs* **exhibition**, **cinema**, and **internet**; a four channel installation, a single channel installation, a film, and an online display. These transforming gestures build the core structure of both, the presentation and the documentation of *Slow Action*.

Transformative gestures

four channel installation

- 44 min, loop
- rear HD projections onto transparent free-standing screens
- sound with speakers

film

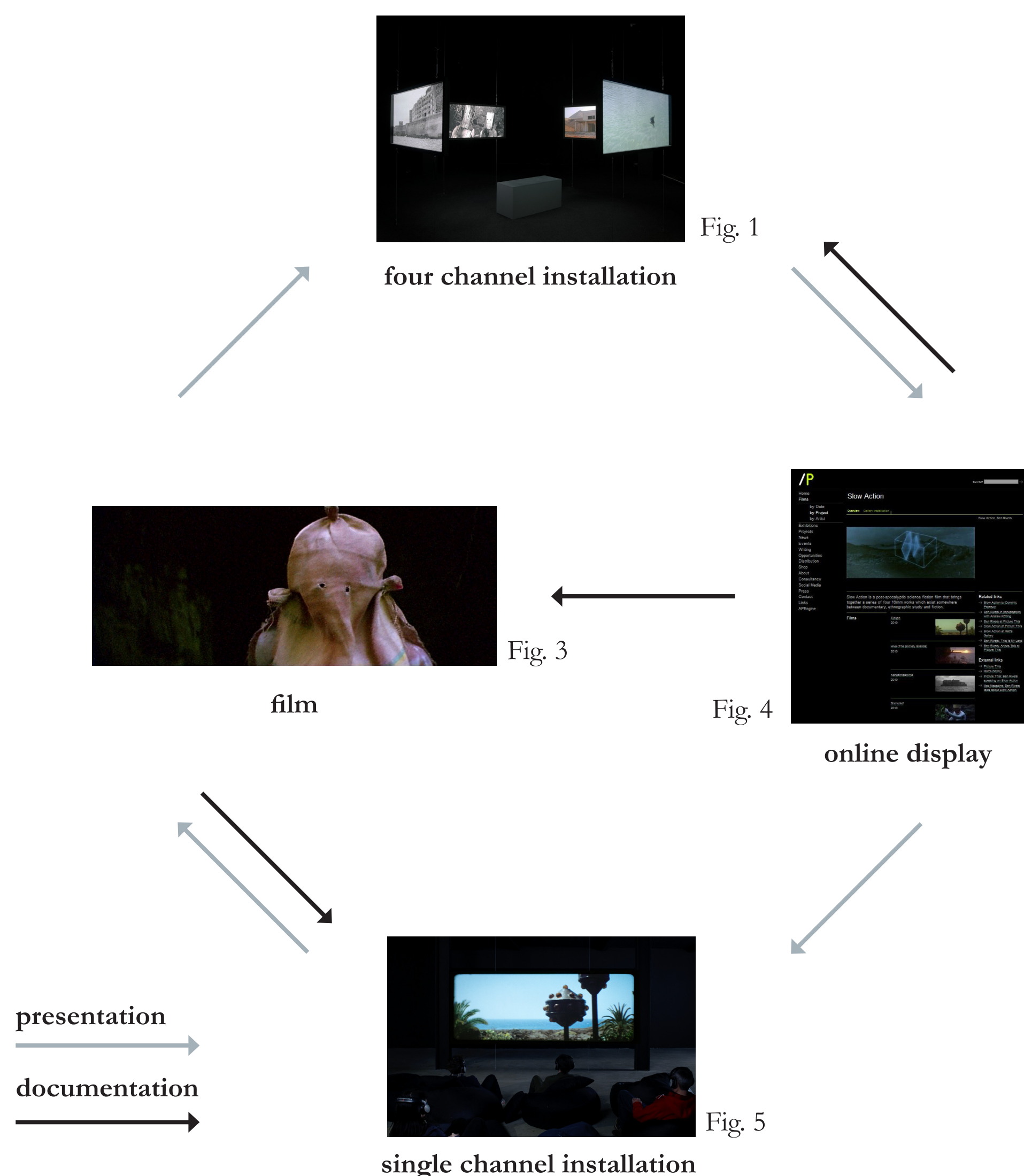
- 45 min, fixed screening times
- 16 mm, HD or blu-ray projection
- sound with speakers
- includes opening sequence

online display

- duration variable
- main page: all four portrays are displayed
- subpages: new window opens, selected sequence is streamed online³

single channel installation

- 45 min, fixed screening times
- 16 mm projection
- sound with cordless headphones
- individual seating furniture
- includes opening sequence



GENERAL QUESTION

Documenting ephemeral art

As moving image installations are ephemeral in presentation, art historians depend on their documentations; for example a photographic installation shot (fig. 1). This creates a tenuous situation for moving image installations as in these secondary sources the indispensable qualities of the installations such as duration, sound, spatial relations, and visitor movements get lost. By documenting ephemeral art, the art projects are de-contextualized and transferred to media and *dispositifs* different from the exhibition and new meaning evolves. Is there a way to document moving image installations by preserving their core qualities and meaning in the documentation?¹

MY QUESTION

Feedback on artists' documentation

In my research I look at the tenuous situation of documenting ephemeral art from the artists' perspective. My analysis of moving image installations from the 1960s until today reveals that the production and documentation of these installations increasingly merge; the artwork becomes the documentation and vice versa. Although still being de-contextualized and transferred to another medium and *dispositif*, documentations by artists preserve the indispensable qualities of a moving image installation and its core meaning.

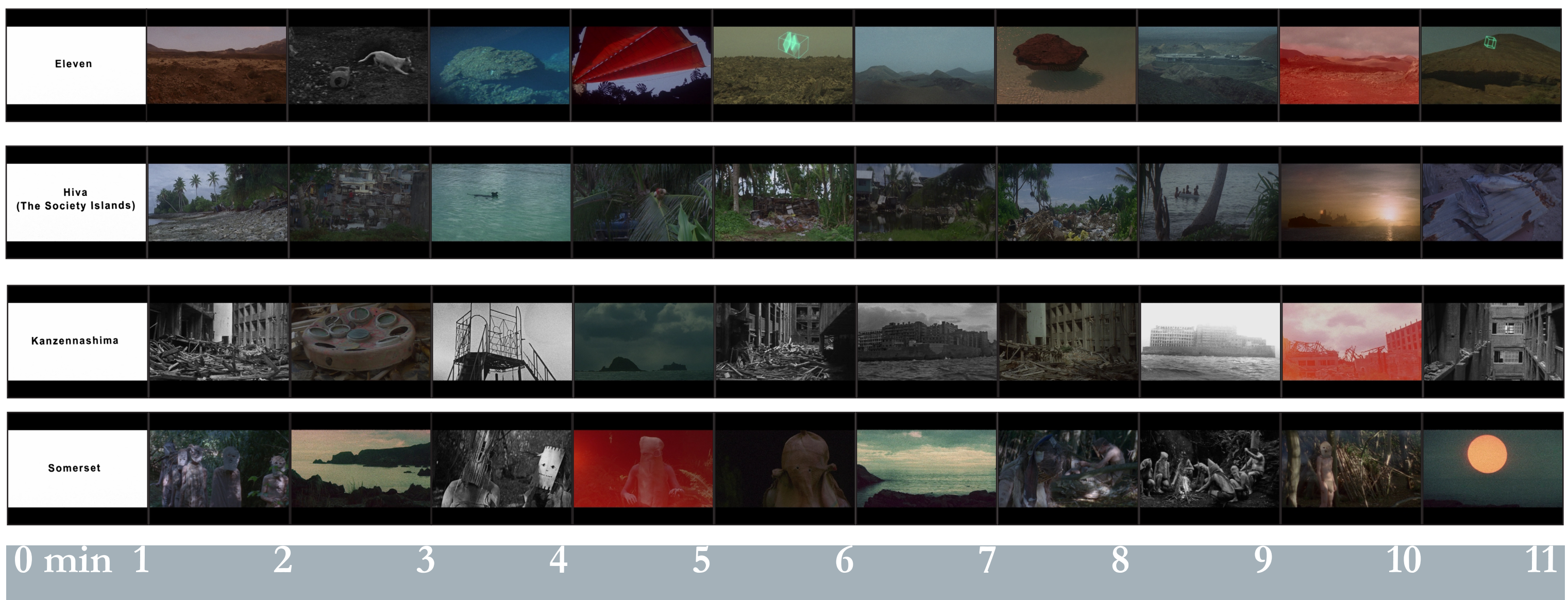


Fig. 2 Selected frames from *Slow Action*.

CONCLUSION

In Rivers' artistic approach of documenting *Slow Action* the four versions embody the epistemic status of both, presentation and documentation. By making use of primary material only, Rivers preserves the indispensable qualities of the installation and takes into account the genuine relation between the moving images, the space, and the visitors/users. Each version is adapted to the core structure of *Slow Action* according to its medium and *dispositif*.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Along with *Slow Action* further installations are relevant for my analysis of various types of artistic documentation of moving image installations, amongst them *Asylum* (2001/02) by Julian Rosefeldt, *Sleepwalkers* (2007) by Doug Aitken, and *Where is Where?* (2008) by Eija-Liisa Ahtila. These case studies are part of my doctoral dissertation and coevally of sub-project 1 in the research project "At the limits of the archive". My dissertation deals with the aesthetic and epistemic diversity in documentations of moving image installations. Documentations applied in the art historical discourse are analysed and compared to those produced in the artistic and popular-scientific realm. By making accessible the artistic and popular-scientific documentations, I put emphasis on recognising the transformative gestures such as re-editing and re-staging. This enables to preserve the structure and core qualities of moving image installations in their documentation.

References

1. Alain Depocas, "Digital preservation: recording the recoding – the documentary strategy," 2002, <http://www.fondationlanglois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=152> (last accessed November 1st 2010).
2. Cf. Elizabeth Cowie, "On documentary sounds and images in the gallery", in *Screen* 50/1, Spring 2009, pp. 124-134.
3. *Slow Action* at Animate Projects, 2011, http://www.animateprojects.org/films/by_project/solo_commissions/slow_action (last accessed November 9th 2012).

Figures

- Fig. 1 Courtesy of Picture This.
Fig. 2 Selected frames from *Slow Action*.
Fig. 3 Still from *Slow Action*, distributed by LUX London.
Fig. 4 Screenshot of *Slow Action* at Animate Projects, courtesy of Animate Projects.
Fig. 5 *Slow Action*, installation shot of single channel installation at Matt's Gallery, London, 2011, courtesy of Matt's Gallery.

All images courtesy of Kate MacGarry Gallery and the artist.

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